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re: Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People (20 September 2001)

A sample analysis using both a Freudian perspective, and Osgood's semantic differential theory.

The Presidential speech of 20 September 2001 appears to target all three aspects of the psyche, the Id, Ego, and Superego. This approach appears to be the foundation of the psychological warfare program, particularly in regards to clean torture and interrogation.

Ego Appeal:

-Declaration: *"I Will Not Yield; I Will Not Rest; I Will Not Relent."*

-Explanation: This declaration appeals to the ego by reflecting determination, resilience, and a commitment to a course of action. It emphasizes the nation's ability to navigate challenges and maintain composure in the aftermath of the attack.

The President emphasizes the endurance and courage of rescuers, the unity of Americans in the face of tragedy, and the leadership of Congress. The ego is invoked through a collective sense of resilience, emphasizing the nation's ability to navigate challenges and maintain composure in the aftermath of the attack.

Id Appeal:

-Expression of Anger and Justice: *"Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done."*

-Explanation: This id appeal taps into primal emotions of anger and the desire for justice. It expresses the visceral response of the nation's grief turning to anger, with a clear call for action against the perpetrators.

The id is engaged through the expression of the nation's grief turning to anger, with a clear call for action against the perpetrators. The language emphasizes a visceral response to the threat, aligning with instinctual reactions.

Superego Appeal:

-Moral Condemnation: *"The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself."*

-Explanation: This superego appeal involves moral condemnation, framing the conflict as a battle between the values of freedom and tolerance against the radical and murderous ideologies of the terrorists. It reflects a moral stance against terrorism and the importance of defending fundamental values.

The President makes ethical and moral statements, condemning the terrorists and their ideology. The superego is invoked by framing the conflict as a battle between the values of freedom and tolerance against the radical and murderous ideologies of the terrorists. The call for unity among nations reflects a moral stance against terrorism.

Ego Appeal:

-Significance: The ego appeal is powerful as it taps into individuals' sense of self and identity, both personal and collective. By declaring determination, resilience, and commitment, the speech fosters a collective ego, emphasizing the nation's ability to overcome challenges and maintain composure.

-Psychological Significance: People are inclined to identify with a resilient and determined collective identity. This fosters a sense of unity and pride, bolstering the nation's resolve in the face of adversity.

Id Appeal:

-Significance: The id appeal targets primal emotions, particularly anger and the desire for justice. It aligns with the visceral response to grief turning into anger, providing an outlet for the instinctual need to address and retaliate against perceived threats.

-Psychological Significance: Activating the id taps into the raw and instinctual aspects of human nature, channeling emotions into a call for action. This emotional charge can mobilize individuals and the collective toward a shared goal of seeking justice.

Superego Appeal:

-Significance: The superego appeal involves moral condemnation and frames the conflict in ethical terms. By condemning the terrorists as traitors to their own faith, the speech establishes a moral high ground, positioning the nation as defenders of fundamental values.

-Psychological Significance: Engaging the superego invokes a sense of moral duty and righteousness. By framing the conflict as a battle between values, the speech seeks to unite people under a common moral cause, fostering a shared commitment to defending freedom and tolerance.

Persuasive Tactic Rationale:

-Comprehensive Influence: Targeting all three aspects of the psyche ensures a comprehensive influence on individuals. It addresses emotional, identity-based, and moral dimensions, creating a multifaceted appeal that resonates with diverse psychological aspects of the audience.

- Unity and Mobilization: The combination of ego, id, and superego appeals aims to unite the audience by fostering a shared identity, channeling emotional energy into a call for action, and aligning individuals with a moral cause. This unity enhances the mobilization of collective efforts in response to the perceived threat.

The persuasive tactic of targeting all three aspects of the psyche in the analyzed speech is designed to create a holistic and impactful communication strategy. By appealing to ego, id, and superego, the speech aims to shape perceptions, emotions, and moral perspectives, fostering a collective response aligned with the desired goals.

Osgood's Semantic Differential Technique:**Evaluation:**

-Positive Evaluation: The positive evaluation in expressions of gratitude and commitment to strengthen security serves to instill a sense of unity and resilience among the audience. It fosters a positive emotional response, emphasizing the nation's collective strength in the face of adversity.

-Negative Evaluation: The negative evaluation when condemning acts of war reflects the gravity of the situation. It amplifies the emotional impact, conveying the severity of the threat and the need for a decisive response.

Potency:

-High Potency: The use of high-potency language in phrases like "justice will be done" and the declaration of war on terror amplifies the importance and intensity of the nation's response. It mobilizes the audience by emphasizing the significance of the actions being taken.

-Low Potency: Statements respecting the people of Afghanistan with lower potency contribute to a more measured and diplomatic tone, acknowledging the complexity of international relationships and potential consequences.

Activity:

-High Activity: The high level of activity conveyed through calls to come together, rally the world, and not tire instills a sense of urgency and collective action. It encourages the audience to actively participate in the nation's response to the crisis.

-Low Activity: Statements emphasizing routine activities and patience provide a balanced perspective, acknowledging that certain aspects of the response require time, reflection, and perseverance.

Significance in the Psyche:

Evaluation refers to the perceived positivity or negativity of a concept. When individuals use this dimension, they are essentially making judgments about whether a stimulus is good or bad, favorable or unfavorable.

For instance, in the evaluation dimension, respondents might be asked to consider whether a concept is pleasant or unpleasant, likable or unlikable. The scale used to measure evaluation would reflect the continuum between these opposing adjectives, providing a quantitative representation of the affective valence attributed to the stimulus.

Positive Evaluation: When the speech includes positive evaluations, such as expressions of gratitude or commitment to security, it has a positive impact on the psyche of the audience. Positive evaluations can evoke emotions like hope, unity, and determination, fostering a sense of collective strength and resilience.

Negative Evaluation: Conversely, negative evaluations, as seen in the condemnation of acts of war, contribute to a sense of gravity and seriousness. Negative evaluations can elicit emotions like anger, resolve, and a heightened awareness of the challenges at hand.

Significance in Potency:

Potency, in the context of Osgood's theory, refers to the perceived strength or weakness of a concept. It encapsulates the extent to which individuals attribute a sense of power, intensity, or forcefulness to the stimulus being evaluated. For instance, when assessing a concept, respondents might consider whether it is perceived as strong or weak, dominant or submissive.

Positive Evaluation (High Potency): Positive evaluations with high potency, such as declarations of justice being done, amplify the importance and intensity of the message. This can motivate and mobilize the audience, emphasizing the significance of the actions being taken.

Positive Evaluation (Low Potency): Positive evaluations with lower potency, like statements respecting the people of Afghanistan, may contribute to a more measured and diplomatic tone, acknowledging complexities and potential consequences.

Significance in Activity:

Activity, on the other hand, pertains to the perceived level of dynamism or passivity associated with a stimulus. This dimension captures the extent to which individuals attribute an active or passive quality to the concept under consideration. For example, when evaluating a concept, respondents might reflect on whether it is seen as dynamic, energetic, or, conversely, as static or inert.

Positive Evaluation (High Activity): Positive evaluations coupled with high activity language, such as calls to come together and rally the world, encourage an active response from the audience. It instills a sense of urgency and collective action.

Positive Evaluation (Low Activity): Positive evaluations with lower activity, seen in statements emphasizing routine activities and patience, provide a balanced perspective. It acknowledges that certain aspects of the response require time, reflection, and perseverance.

The three dimensions of Osgood's Semantic Differential Theory form a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals perceive and attribute meaning to various stimuli and plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional impact of language.

Reasons why a balanced approach might be employed:

Audience Diversity:

The audience for a presidential address is diverse, with individuals holding various beliefs, values, and emotional responses. A balanced approach allows the speech to resonate with a broader range of people, increasing the likelihood of connecting with different segments of the population.

Emotional Resonance:

Different situations and segments of the speech may require varying emotional tones. For instance, expressions of gratitude and unity might call for a positive and uplifting tone, while addressing the seriousness of acts of war demands a more somber and condemnatory tone. Balancing these tones enhances emotional resonance.

Credibility and Trust:

A balanced approach that acknowledges both the gravity of the situation and the potential for positive action contributes to the speaker's credibility. It shows a realistic understanding of the complexities involved, fostering trust among the audience. If the speech were overly one-sided, it might be perceived as overly simplistic or biased.

Motivation for Action:

By combining positive evaluations with high potency and activity when discussing actions against terrorism, the speech aims to motivate the audience to actively participate in the collective response. Balancing optimism with a realistic acknowledgment of challenges can be more motivating than a purely positive or negative approach.

Maintaining Composure:

In times of crisis, maintaining composure and projecting a steady and responsible leadership image is crucial. The speech may balance positive and negative evaluations to convey strength, resilience, and a measured response to the situation.

Addressing Different Dimensions:

The speech is not solely focused on persuasion but also involves providing information, expressing condolences, and outlining concrete actions. Balancing aspects ensures that the speech addresses different dimensions of the complex post-attack scenario.
